CHARLES PETTIGREW, FIRST BISHOP-ELECT OF THE NORTH CAROLINA EPISCOPAL CHURCH[1]

By Bennett H. Wall

Charles Pettigrew, more familiarly known to his contemporaries as "Old Parson" Pettigrew, was born March 20, 1744, near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. His father, James Pettigrew, a Scotch-Irish immigrant, moved from Pennsylvania to Lunenburg County, Virginia, about 1757. While in Virginia Charles attended the famous classical school of Reverend Moses Waddel. The diligence with which the young student applied himself led the blind schoolmaster to reward his pupil with a present of several Greek books.[2] His schooling with Waddel was interrupted by the move of his family to Granville County, North Carolina, where James Pettigrew purchased 300 acres of land. Henry Pattillo, a Presbyterian minister, noted teacher, and head of an academy, was pastor of a church in that county and the Pettigrews attended his church. It was Pattillo who shaped the education and possibly the career of Charles, the only member of the Pettigrew family to attend Pattillo's school.[3] The Pattillo-Pettigrew correspondence, after Charles moved to Edenton, reveals that the master had been an inquisitive as well as stimulating teacher and that he had pushed his students as fast as they could assimilate the work offered.[4] In 1768 James Pettigrew and all of the members of his family, except Charles, moved to the Abbeville District in South Carolina where the family put down more permanent roots.

The reason Charles Pettigrew remained in North Carolina in 1768 was that he had found profitable employment as a school teacher in Bute County.[5] In 1776 twenty-two year old Charles Pettigrew was employed by Philemon Hawkins and Mrs. Priscilla Macon to teach all students who applied but principally their

[1] A portion of this research was made possible through a grant from the University of Kentucky Research Fund Committee.

[2] James Waddel to Charles Pettigrew, February 10, 1804, Pettigrew Family Manuscripts, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Hereinafter cited as Pettigrew MSS.

[3] James Johnston Pettigrew copy of the deposition of William Pettigrew, Pettigrew MSS.

[4] Henry Pattillo to Charles Pettigrew, December 13, 1788, April 6, 1792; Charles Pettigrew to Henry Pattillo, May 12, 1792, Pettigrew MSS.

[5] Now Franklin and Warren counties.

sons, Joseph and Benjamin Hawkins and John and Nathaniel Macon. Pettigrew instructed these students for only a few years but kept in touch with them for many years.[6] Three of these men later entered Princeton and two of them became famous in the early national period of the United States.[7]

In 1766 Charles Pettigrew began to contact friends in Edenton, a leading seaport on the Albemarle Sound. From the William Parkes Company he purchased many items including classics, books of sermons, and commentaries.[8] His friends in the port of Edenton supplied him with the information that in 1770 a "Publick" school had been established in that town and that the master of the school was required to be a churchman, recommended by a majority of the board of trustees and licensed by the governor.[9] Pettigrew made application for a teaching position there, and in 1773 he received his appointment as master of the "Publick School in Edenton" during the pleasure of Josiah Martin, the royal governor of North Carolina.[10]

As soon as he received the news of his appointment, Pettigrew resigned his position in Bute County and moved to Edenton. He became a member of the Church of England about this time and obtained a position as lay reader of St. Paul's Church in Edenton. Since several members of the vestry of St. Paul's Parish were trustees of the academy, it is reasonable to assume that he had contacted these men and made known to them his desire to become a minister of the Church of England. Whether or not that view is correct, it is known that while occupying the positions of schoolmaster and lay reader he engaged in the studies expected of candidates for ordination in that church. In the spring of 1775 he sailed for London where he was duly ordained deacon and priest by the bishops of London and Rochester.

Pettigrew did not tarry in London, being anxious to return to the colony[11] and begin his ministerial tasks. He was assigned to

[6] William Edward Dodd, *Life of Nathaniel Macon* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1903), 3.

[7] Nathaniel Macon served as a member of Congress, Speaker of the House, and United States Senator. Benjamin Hawkins served as United States Senator and Indian Agent.

[8] Account of Charles Pettigrew with William Parkes Company, September 1, 1771, Pettigrew MSS.

[9] William Lloyd De Rosset, Jr. (publisher and editor), *Sketches of Church History in North Carolina, Addresses and Papers by Clergymen and Laymen of the Diocese of North and East Carolina* (Wilmington, 1902), p. 17. Hereinafter cited as De Rosset, *Church History.*

[10] License as Teacher of the Edenton Publick School, June 23, 1773, Pettigrew MSS.

[11] Griffith J. McRee, *Life and Correspondence of James Iredell* (2 vols. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1858), I, 241-242, Arthur Iredell to James Iredell, April 25, 1777, Hereinafter cited as McRee, *Iredell.*

the Edenton parish by the Bishop of London, who was the "Diocesan of the Plantations."[12] Reverend Charles Pettigrew was to receive an annual salary of twenty pounds sterling as a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. He was the last missionary assigned to the colony of North Carolina.

Charles Pettigrew arrived at Edenton late in the spring of 1773.[13] The state of the Anglican Church in the colony at this time was most unsatisfactory from the standpoint of the devout. Numerous sects, especially the Baptists, Methodists, and Quakers, were making inroads on the Anglican parishes in the tidewater region. This condition was occasioned by two factors: first, the dissoluteness of many of the clergymen assigned to the colony and second, the rising tide of hostility to all things English. Many of the clergy drank and gambled, and in general neglected their parishes. Even Reverend Daniel Earl, Pettigrew's advisor and colleague, was popularly supposed to be more interested in his herring fishery than in the spiritual welfare of his congregation. On one occasion a wag placed this brief poem on the door of St. Paul's Church:

A very fine church
And a very fine steeple
A Herring-catching parson
And a wicked set of people

Several years earlier Reverend C. E. Taylor, an Anglican minister sent to North Carolina by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, denounced Earl in a letter to the Secretary of the Society. Earl had refused to let him preach in St. Paul's Church, although many members requested that he do so. Taylor charged that Earl collected excessive fees from the poor for such rites as baptism and administering sacraments to the dying. He urged the establishment of an American Episcopate ". . . if it tends to no other purpose than to take cognizance of the Clergy, some of whom (I am sorry to say) are the greatest scandal to religion we have . . . ." He concluded his diatribe by stating with regard to

[12] Arthur Lyon Cross, *The Anglican Episcopate and The American Colonies* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1902), 4-36.

[13] Thomas Jones to Joseph Hewes, June 28, 1775, Hayes Collection (at Hayes near Edenton). Abstracted copy in Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Earl ". . . the people themselves have a greater regard for Religion than he. . . ."[14] According to other accounts, Reverend Earl also neglected the physical condition of his church. Despite this bleak outlook, Charles Pettigrew was anxious to begin preaching. Perhaps he believed that he could remedy or improve the state of religion in his parish.

At the time of Pettigrew's arrival the Edenton parish to which he was assigned was so extensive that the regular pastor, Daniel Earl, preached at St. Paul's only one Sunday out of three and at other chapels the remaining Sundays. Pettigrew was prevailed upon to follow the same plan. "Notwithstanding which . . ." he took the "Barkley Parish in Perquimans, the adjoining county," for the year 1775 and agreed to ". . . make up the vacant Sundays by preaching on week days."[15] This parish contained five chapels[16] and kept the young minister busy. He visited Barkley Parish by travelling by boat on the Albemarle Sound and on occasion he went by land, on the north shore of the sound.[17] The principal portion of his salary was subscribed by his parishioners. No record is available of the subscriptions of his Barkley parishioners but in 1775 those in Edenton supplemented his annual salary from the Society by more than seventy pounds.[18]

On June 19, 1776, the Vestry of St. Paul's Parish met and drew up a document known as the "Declaration of Independence of St. Paul's Parish." This document denied the right of Parliament to impose "Taxes upon these colonies" or

> to regulate the internal policy thereof and that all attempts by Fraud or Force to establish and exercise such claims and powers are violations of the Peace and Security of the People and ought to be resisted to the utmost and that the people of this Province singly and Collectively are bound by the Acts and Resolutions of the Continental and the Provincial Congress.

The subscribers elected six delegates to the provincial congress and promised to support the acts and resolutions of this and subsequent congresses. Their defiant spirit was marked by the mild

[14] William Laurence Saunders (ed.), *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, IX, 21. Hereinafter cited as *Colonial Records*.
[15] *Colonial Records*, X, 496.
[16] *Colonial Records*, X, 496.
[17] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Pettigrew, March 15, 1795, Pettigrew MSS.
[18] Salary Subscription List, 1775, Pettigrew MSS. It is interesting to note that one of his parishioners, James Iredell, a prominent political figure in North Carolina and later a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, cautiously suffixed his subscription of four pounds with the statement "if he is living and can conveniently pay it."

and conciliatory tone of the introductory sentence: "We the Subscribers professing our allegiance to the King and acknowledging the Constitutional executive power of government. . . ."[19] The document can only by the most liberal interpretation be called a "Declaration of Independence." It was merely an indication that the vestry shared and endorsed the actions of the provincial government.

With the outbreak of hostilities the Anglican clergy in North Carolina and the remainder of the colonies were placed at a tremendous disadvantage in matters spiritual. In addition to the absentee control over spiritual matters exercised by the Bishop of London and the fact that most of the clergy were employed and partially paid by the Society, they labored under the theoretical disadvantage of supporting a legal establishment. Many of the clergy, feeling that the oath of allegiance to the king bound them, either left the colony or became outright Tories and the church organization virtually dissolved.[20] Finally, the very term "England" was detrimental to the church during the heat of the Revolution.

Pettigrew's role during the Revolution is difficult to evaluate. During the first years of the war he continued to preach and pursue his ministerial duties with vigor. He was suspected of being a Tory by many of the radical Whigs but this would appear to be without foundation. Since he was affiliated with the Church of England, he felt bound by his oath to maintain his connection with that church. Furthermore, he needed his salary from the Society. This fact is substantiated by his effort to get the Society to honor a bill of exchange for his services as late as 1783.[21] In 1776 Pettigrew reported to the Secretary of the Society that he ". . . already baptized an hundred and twenty children, six grown persons and administered the Sacrement of the Lord's Supper to Eighteen Communicants . . ." and he took pride in this achievement. He concluded his letter with the remark that he could "mention nothing with regard to public affairs for such letters"

[19] "Records of the Proceedings of the Vestry of St. Paul's Church, Edenton, North Carolina, 1701-1841," 263. (Typewritten copy in the possession of Dr. and Mrs. Frank Porter Graham.) Herinafter cited as "Vestry Records."

[20] Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 333. Hereinafter cited as Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina.*

[21] Reuben Harvey to Charles Pettigrew, April 14, 1784; correspondence, *passim*, Pettigrew MSS.

were "not allowed to pass."[22] The Society was proud of his accomplishments, stating officially: "Throughout the most trying period [the Revolution], however, the Reverend C. Pettigrew was enabled to continue his missionary journeys and to baptize 3,000 infants within eight years."[23]

Despite this closeness of his religious ties with England some evidence indicates that he was sympathetic to the cause of his fellow citizens. On November 28, 1777, upon request he held divine services before the state assembly.[24] A resolution granting him fifty pounds for performing this service passed the senate[25] but the house refused to concur.[26] Just what occasioned this disagreement is not stated but conceivably Pettigrew's loyalty may have been questioned.

In 1778 Reverend Daniel Earl resigned as rector of St. Paul's because of poor health. Charles Pettigrew was elected to succeed him and his parishioners subscribed 100 pounds to support their new rector, who was to preach on alternate Sundays.[27] Another major event of 1778 for Pettigrew was his marriage to Mary Blount, daughter of Colonel John Blount, and a close connection of several prominent North Carolina families. Blount, an enthusiastic Whig, belonged to the group skeptical of Pettigrew's loyalty to the cause of independence. Eventually he sought to force his son-in-law to take a stand. The occasion was the continuing success of the English effort to gain control of the southern ports of Savannah and Charleston and to use them as bases to strike inland. This caused many persons to be drafted who had not been too involved in the actual war before 1780. Colonel John Blount was very desirous that his son-in-law serve and one source indicates that he promoted Pettigrew's call to the colors out of malice. Richard Templeman wrote Charles Pettigrew:

I did not imagine Colonel Blount would carry his vindictive disposition so far—but be it with him. I hope, as you are determined to march with the militia, youl meet every indulgence thats in the power of Genl Gregory or the commanding officer to afford you, and that youl act the philosopher in parting with your fam-

[22] *Colonial Records*, X, 496.
[23] *Classified Digest of the Records of the Society for the Propagation of The Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1892* (London: 1893), 25.
[24] Walter Clark (ed.), *The State Records of North Carolina*, XII, 149. Hereinafter cited as *State Records*.
[25] *State Records*, XII, 155.
[26] *State Records*, XII, 321-322.
[27] Salary Subscription Lists, 1778, Pettigrew MSS.

ily and going thro the fatigues of a Summers Campaign in a Southern climate.[28]

Pettigrew was not anxious to serve and as soon as he was drafted he secured a substitute and was discharged. On the back of the discharge he noted, "a $7,500 [*sic*] touch—the price of a clergyman's exemption from military service in North Carolina."[29] It is possible that he was not in good health at this time, for several accounts indicate that his church was in a dilapidated state, which condition Charles Pettigrew would never permit when he was in good health. But 1781 brought the Revolution to a close and in 1783 the Treaty of Paris was signed officially ending the war.

It is interesting to note that during the Revolution and while Pettigrew was rector of St. Paul's he kept an account of the "Ballances due . . . by subscription" and that in some cases he scaled down individual subscriptions. Several of his parishioners paid their subscriptions in produce, and in one case the rector accepted barrelled herring in lieu of currency. When the subscribers failed to pay their pledges steps were taken to collect them. Each subscription list contains entries such as "declines to pay," "Judgment," and "appealed."[30] Since the parish taxes levied by the church vestry carried the sanction of law, there is little doubt that these subscriptions were collectible and that the only legal means of non-payment was to plead insolvency.[31]

Pettigrew lived in or near Edenton during the course of the Revolution. On the two Sundays that he did not serve his Edenton parish, he preached in the country chapels nearby.[32] In 1778, for conducting services at St. Paul's Church on every other Sunday, he was to receive a sum ". . . agreed on by the Parties that the several Subscriptions shall increase or diminish at the commencement of every year according to the Rise or fall of the money, so as to keep it equal to one hundred pounds in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-four."[33] This provided him with a reasonable income and was supplemented by the congregations where he preached the remainder of his time. But in

[28] Richard Templeman to Charles Pettigrew, January 10, 1780, Pettigrew Papers, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh. Hereinafter cited as Pettigrew Papers.
[29] Charles Pettigrew's Discharge from Military Service, June 27, 1780. Pettigrew MSS.
[30] Subscription Lists, 1775, 1778, 1781, Pettigrew MSS.
[31] "Vestry Records," 1-271. See also *The Religious and Historic Commemoration of Two Hundred Years of St. Paul's Parish, Edenton, N. C.* (Goldsboro, North Carolina, 1901), 5.
[32] Salary Subscription Lists, 1778, 1783, Pettigrew MSS.
[33] Salary Subscription Lists, 1778, Pettigrew MSS.

1783 the new subscription list for his parish in Edenton amounted to only forty-eight pounds and ten shillings.[34] This amount was insufficient for a family of four and it is not improbable that this reduction precipitated a desire to leave Edenton.

Another factor in his growing desire to change parishes was the fact that the task of supplying so extensive a parish as St. Paul's placed a strain on his health. An attack of spleen and a raging temperature prevented his attending a conference conducted by Francis Asbury early in 1784. He apologized for his nonattendance: "I had a great desire of being at your conference, and to have taken a small circuit some farther to the northward in quest of a more healthy situation as I am determined to leave this place."[35] This is the first indication that Pettigrew had made a decision to leave Edenton. Possibly the scarcity of competent clergymen was another factor rendering him dissatisfied, for he and his fellow clergymen were much in demand and opportunities to move to other parishes were numerous.

This state of indecision and the general religious listlessness of his parishioners hampered Pettigrew's religious activities. While he was away at St. Eustatia in 1785, his parish was visited by Dr. Thomas Coke, a renowned Methodist leader. Coke reported:

> I went to Edenton, a most wicked place. Here Mr. Pettigrew preaches. The people in general seemed to prefer the courthouse, which is an elegant place, so I went there accordingly, and preached to a large congregation . . . there seemed nothing but wickedness and dissipation in the tavern at which I put up . . . . I suppose Mr. Pettigrew does as much good in Edenton as a little chicken.[36]

Bishop Coke did not know that Pettigrew had made plans to move to Virginia because of the virtual collapse of his church organization in the Edenton area.

About a year prior to Coke's visit the vestry of Lynnhaven Parish, Kempsville, Princess Anne County, Virginia, approached Pettigrew on the subject of moving to that parish. Peter Singleton wrote that they would get more subscriptions as soon as the parishioners learned that Pettigrew was taking the parish. Singleton pointed out that a dwelling house had been located and

[34] Salary Subscription Lists, 1783, Pettigrew MSS.
[35] Charles Pettigrew to Francis Asbury, May 1, 1784, Pettigrew MSS.
[36] W. L. Grissom, *History of Methodism in North Carolina* (Nashville, 1905), 163.

that the plantation Pettigrew had considered purchasing was still for sale. He concluded his letter by commenting "N.B. Most of the people of the county (Baptists excepted) earnestly wish to get you settled in this county."[37]

Pettigrew expected to move to Lynnhaven Parish early in 1785. Throughout the fall he corresponded with Singleton, William White, Phillip Bruce, and others, and in all of his letters he expressed confidence and satisfaction with his decision to leave Edenton. Before moving he hoped to stimulate his health by a short sea voyage. He wrote to Francis Asbury:

> I have it in contemplation to go on a voyage to sea before I move to which my Yoke fellow has been much averse till Lately, & now the great obstacle will be that of geting my own consent, which I find will be very Difficult—parting with my family is a most Disagreeable thought.[38]

To Edward Drumgoole he gave his reasons for taking a voyage:

> I have agreed to move to Princess Anne, Virginia and, as it would not be safe to move into a more cold and bleak air, in so relax'd a Habbit to say nothing about the honesty of taking the charge of a parish, while unable to do the Duties incumbent, & which would be their undoubted Claim; I have come to a resolution of making a voyage to the West Indies . . .[39]

Apparently Pettigrew thought that the final decision regarding the date of moving was a personal matter, for he had made no definite plans to move as late as December. He ignored a warning note in a letter from Peter Singleton that there were other applicants for the job[40] and continued to plan his voyage.

In January he sailed by way of Ocracoke for St. Eustatia. To his wife he wrote, "I know the Occocockers will be glad to see me as they will be ready freighted with Children to baptize & I hope I shall be able to give them a lecture, and to gratify them in that particular."[41] While at St. Eustatia he preached in town at the request of the governor and the principal gentlemen.[42] Pettigrew had taken two of his slaves from his plantation to St.

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[37] Peter Singleton to Charles Pettigrew, August 16, 1784, Pettigrew Papers.
[38] Charles Pettigrew to Francis Asbury, May 1, 1784, Pettigrew MSS.
[39] Charles Pettigrew to Edward Drumgoole, September 22, 1784, Drumgoole MSS., Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill. Hereinafter cited as Drumgoole MSS.
[40] Peter Singleton to Charles Pettigrew, December 30, 1784, Pettigrew Papers.
[41] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Pettigrew, January 24, 1785, Pettigrew MSS.
[42] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Pettigrew, March 11, 1785, Pettigrew MSS.

Eustatia to sell. His failure to make a speedy sale delayed his return for over a month.[43]

When he returned home in May he found several letters from members of the Lynnhaven Parish indicating that other clergymen had applied for the position. Peter Singleton had reported late in March, 1785, that the vestry was still for him although a Reverend James Simpson was "politicing" to get the job. Singleton explained:

> The vestry has no further meaning, that I know of, by inclosing you a Copy of an Act of Assembly incorporating the church & c, than of fixing the time you shall be here to the 1st of May, than to expedite your removal. . . .[44]

But Pettigrew did not receive this letter of March 21, telling him to come before the first of May, until he returned. In his absence, his plans for moving to the new parish were carried out. As an advance guard he had sent two of his slaves to begin planting a corn crop.[45] Hence he was highly indignant to learn that his failure to assume his post as rector of Lynnhaven Parish before the first of May had caused the vestry to come "to a Determination to vote for a Minister, & have this Day [May 6] elected the Rev'd Simpson to fill the sacred office."[46] He found little comfort in Peter Singleton's letter terming the treatment of the vestry "dishonorable" and pointing out that Simpson had been elected "by some secret and undue means."[47] Writing while still angry, Pettigrew charged the vestry with breach of faith:

> Your letter of ye 6th inst. tells me the disagreeable consequence of my not being able to comply with your limitations respecting the Time of my removal to your parish. It found me destitute of either House or home, or ground in the County for a crop the cur't year, and using all the industry I could to get away, agreeable to engagement with you, which engagement was mutual, & without Limitation as to Time, & made with this reserve on my part, 'That I should not remove to ye charge till I had returned from a voyage to sea for the Benefit of my health–. And I beg leave to observe, that I am not conscious of *such guilt,* incured by my unavoidable *non-complyance,* as deserved *final Rejection,*

[43] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Pettigrew, March 11, 1785, Pettigrew MSS.
[44] Peter Singleton to Charles Pettigrew, March 21, 1785, Pettigrew Papers.
[45] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Pettigrew, March 11, 1785, Pettigrew MSS.
[46] Charles Williamson and John Cornick, Church Wardens, to Charles Pettigrew, May 6, 1785, Pettigrew Papers.
[47] Peter Singleton to Charles Pettigrew, May 7, 1785, Pettigrew Papers. William White expressed the same view, May 7, 1785, Pettigrew Papers.

after two orders of Vestry in my favor, & without anything having been alledged whereon you could rationally found a Doubt of my integrity,–& more especially, as your Determination must necessarily subject me to many inconveniences at this season of the year'. . . if your zeal for the Devotional part of Religion was so ardent, as not to suffer you to wait a few Days, may he be so fortunate as to keep it always alive . . .[48]

It was small comfort some time later to learn that the choice of Simpson was not wise.[49]

The parson nursed his injured pride and late as it was did not fail to plant a crop on his farm near Edenton. In 1786 he moved to Harvey's Neck, Perquimans County, where he remained for two years. In 1788 he moved to Belgrade Plantation, where he was to spend most of the remaining years of his life. This plantation was somewhat remote from his former homes, being accessible to Edenton only by the Albemarle Sound. During this interval his religious activities were limited by his interest in agriculture, the death of his wife, and poor health. While many of his friends expressed dissatisfaction that so much talent should be confined to so limited a field, Pettigrew wrote with some pleasure concerning his services:

I preach chiefly at home to a few attentive hearers, with almost no exertion. When I used to preach to great crowds I generally incurred a fever. If I do little good, I am content to receive nothing for it. However I sometimes find myself very happy in a kind of unstudied paternal address, & seeing the appearance of correspondent sensations excited in my hearers. They are generally good morallists & good neighbours.[50]

The fact that the ablest minister in the state could retire from active service with such indifference is indicative of the low estate of the church in North Carolina. Additional evidence of the decline of the church is found in the correspondence of other ministers with Pettigrew. Henry Pattillo wrote to Pettigrew recommending an autumnal preaching trip among his "old connections" in Granville.[51] Dr. Leonidas Cutting, rector of Christ's Church, in New Bern, wrote:

[48] Charles Pettigrew to Charles Williamson and John Cornick, May 9, 1785, Pettigrew Papers.
[49] Peter Singleton to Charles Pettigrew, April 26, 1787, Pettigrew Papers.
[50] Charles Pettigrew to Henry Pattillo, January 9, 1789, Pettigrew MSS.
[51] Henry Pattillo to Charles Pettigrew, December 13, 1788, Pettigrew MSS.

How it may be in other Parishes or congregations in this state I know not; but here by the Expiration of an Old Law a few years ago, we have no Church Wardens, Vestry-men, nor any Officer to take any Charge or care of the Church. Whatever meetings therefore we may hold of the Church will be Spontaneous, unbacked by proper authority; This is a defect much lamented but which cannot be remedied without an application to assembly.[52]

The church in the southern United States at the close of the Revolution was indeed in a deplorable condition. "The then hated name of 'England' was a great drawback in itself. Furthermore, the church had no organization. Its membership was demoralized, and for the most part indifferent. Worst of all it had no Episcopate."[53] Among the other reasons for the decline of the church was the withdrawal of funds from the American Mission by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. This was occasioned by a clause in the Society's charter which permitted it to work only with the "Foreign plantations" within the British Empire.[54] The legal disestablishment of the church was a direct result of the Revolution. This deprived the clergy of their maintenance and curtailed many of their activities. These factors coupled with the bitter opposition of the Presbyterians and Baptists in the back country rendered the situation critical.

Immediately after the close of the Revolution, a general reorganization of the Episcopal Church in the United States was undertaken which resulted "eventually in the formation of the general constitution which has formed the basis of the Church's national life ever since. . . . Its most important leader, the coordinator of its various elements was William White."[55] The need for resident bishops was more pronounced at this time (1783) than it had been at any previous period. Several state and sectional conventions had been held, principally in the northern and middle states. At a meeting in New York, in October, 1784, "The Convention recommended certain principles of union to the states . . . and that the first meeting of the proposed General Convention should be held in Philadelphia during September, 1785."[56] This

[52] Dr. Leonidas Cutting to Charles Pettigrew, December 13, 1788, Pettigrew Papers.
[53] Marshall DeLancey Haywood, "Charles Pettigrew," in Samuel A'Court Ashe, Stephen Beauregard Weeks, Charles L. Van Noppen, editors, *Biographical History of North Carolina* (8 vols. Greensboro, 1905-1917), VI, 400. Hereinafter cited as Haywood, "Pettigrew."
[54] William Wilson Manross, *A History of the American Episcopal Church* (New York: Columbia University Studies, 1938), 182-183. Hereinafter cited as Manross, *Episcopal Church.*
[55] Manross, *Episcopal Church,* 187.
[56] Manross, *Episcopal Church,* 195.

convention contained representatives from the middle states and from Virginia, South Carolina, and Maryland. White was elected president and a committee was appointed:

> to draft a constitution, revise the liturgy, and formulate a plan for obtaining the episcopate. . . . The general convention was to address the English Bishops and request them to confer Episcopal orders on such men as might be chosen by the state conventions. The state conventions were advised to take special pains to make it clear that the candidates were elected with the concurrence of the laity.[57]

Another convention met in 1786 and certified three men for consecration: William White, Samuel Provoost, and David Griffith. White and Provoost were consecrated in England in February, 1787; Griffith remained at home because of personal difficulties within his diocese. The next convention met in July, 1789, and effected a more solid national organization. A committee of correspondence to establish connections with those states not represented had been appointed in 1785. This committee was continued by the convention of 1789.[58]

Whether or not the clergy of North Carolina was aware of this activity is not known. The attempt to revive the Episcopal Church in that state came as a direct result of a letter which Dr. White, as head of the correspondence committee, addressed to Governor Samuel Johnston of North Carolina. White expressed a wish that the clergy of the Episcopal Church there "would meet at some convenient place and consult among themselves as to what steps should be adopted to revive the church."[59] Governor Johnston turned this letter over to his former rector, Charles Pettigrew, who was the most accessible member of the clergy. Stimulated by the call, Pettigrew came from retirement and immediately took action. He described the results of his activity to Dr. William White:

> As a convention could not be called by the Governor, consistently with the principles of our free republican government, which his Excellency was pleased to communicate to me, I entered into a literary correspondence with my clerical *Brethren* in which I

[57] Manross, *Episcopal Church*, 187.
[58] Manross, *Episcopal Church*, 199; see also William Stevens Perry (ed.), *Journals of the General Conventions of the Protestant Episcopal Church in The United States, 1785-1835* (2 vols. Claremont, New Hampshire, 1884), I, 85-144. Hereinafter cited as Perry, *Journals*.
[59] De Rosset, *Church History*, 182.

proposed a meeting at *this Village* [Tarborough]. . . . My proposition met their general approbation, so that I expected our *small-Body* to have been present, which would have consisted of only six individuals; but to my great mortification; I have been met by only one of them. Yet as my situation was the most remote (I believe) of any, and the pressing necessity of our Church urged us to do something, we proceeded to *business*, by way of beginning, with the joint aid of two gentlemen, of distinguished merit and reputation; & hope our proceedings will meet with at least the indulgence of your committee.[60]

Pettigrew explained the non-attendance of his brother members of the clergy at this June convention of 1790 thus: "The clergy . . . . find it necessary to engage in the business of farming, for the support of their families, as contribution has ever been found so precarious a dependence; and this is perhaps the most busy season of the year, which I did not attend to when I made the appointment."[61] The meeting at Tarboro was attended by Charles Pettigrew and James L. Wilson of the clergy and John Leigh, M.D., and Samuel Clements of the laity. They resolved that their body did "accede and approve" of the constitution formulated at Philadelphia in 1785. They replied to the circular letter of the committee of correspondence and called a new convention to meet at Tarboro on November 12, 1790. It was agreed that the future state conventions should be constituted of all ordained clergymen and of one member from each of the six borough towns as well as one member chosen by the laity of each county where there was no regularly ordained clergyman.[62] A committee composed of Pettigrew, Wilson, and Dr. Leigh (three-fourths of the number present) tersely summed up the condition of the Episcopal Church:

The state of our church is this commonwealth is truly deplorable from the paucity of its clergy & the multiplicity of opposing Sectaries, who are using every possible exertion to seduce its members to their different communities. This grievance however, we hope will be reduced in time, by the energy of the faithful labourers. and we esteem it a most fortunate circumstance that providence has advanced a gentleman of as well known integrity & zeal for the interest of the church and of religion in general,

[60] Charles Pettigrew to Dr. William White, June 6, 1790, Pettigrew MSS. See also Charles Pettigrew to Reverend McDougall, November 9, 1789, Pettigrew MSS.
[61] Charles Pettigrew to Dr. William White, June 6, 1790, Pettigrew MSS.
[62] "Proceedings of the First Convention of the Clergy held at Tarborough" (copy), Pettigrew MSS. Printed also in De Rosset, *Church History*, 417-418.

as the *Right Rev. Doctor White* of Philadelphia to preside in the Episcopal chair. . . .[63]

The call for the second convention was printed in the newspapers of the state.[64] This probably effected the increase in the membership of the convention which met at Tarborough on November 12 and 13, 1790. There were present at this meeting fifteen delegates: six from the clergy and nine from the laity. Delegates were appointed to the General Episcopal Convention to be held in New York in September, 1792. It was agreed to hold an annual convention to be styled "State Convention of the Episcopal Clergy and Laity."[65] Apparently this second convention was not graced by Pettigrew's presence, for in December, 1790, Wilson wrote him that the convention "had small attendence; and . . . proposed more business than could be accomplished, much of which 'was' Deferred to the convention," which was to meet in Tarborough in October, 1791.[66] The members attending from the western part of the state attempted to have the next convention called at Hillsboro in order to effect the election of a bishop. With regard to the election of a bishop, Dr. John Leigh wrote Pettigrew:

I think it is a business which may be deferred for some time yet; but shou'd it become necessary, I see no reason why we cannot appoint, or recommend, one of those now in the state. If the appointment of a Bishop will tend in any degree to raise once more the fallen state of our Church, I'm clearly convinced that it should be done.
This is the object to which the attention of the Clergy as well as Laity, shou'd be drawn. . . . The different persuasions of Religion, which have much for their object the destruction of the Church, are growing into greatness daily; & altho' their Doctrines are absurd, altho' the Supporters are among the most illiterate . . . Religion of whatever kind, can only be sustained by the zealous Exertions of its Supporters. . . . I fear the mode adopted by our last convention will be productive of no good. No subscriptions or Donations have yet reached me, nor have I heard of any one promised; although I had reason to expect some aid from the members appointed.[67]

[63] Committee of North Carolina convention to committee of General Convention, June 5, 1790, Pettigrew MSS.
[64] De Rosset, *Church History*, 417-418.
[65] "Minutes of the North Carolina Episcopal Convention of 1790," De Rosset, *Church History*, 421.
[66] "Minutes of the North Carolina Episcopal Convention of 1790," De Rosset, *Church History*, 421.
[67] Dr. John Leigh to Charles Pettigrew, March 29, 1791, Pettigrew Papers.

He was probably willing to accept Pettigrew's view that the "clergy are . . . hard and mercenary."[68]

The third convention, called to meet in October, 1791, was not attended by sufficient members to organize and transact the necessary business. Pettigrew was unable to attend because of his "being seized with a tertian ague, two or three day's" before he planned his departure.[69] James L. Wilson, appointed delegate to the General Episcopal Convention, was detained by "contrary winds" and did not arrive in Philadelphia until September 28, 1792, some few days after the convention had adjourned.[70] Wilson was the only North Carolina delegate to go to Philadelphia to a general convention during the lifetime of Charles Pettigrew.

In 1792 Pettigrew was informed of his election to the board of trustees of the newly established University of North Carolina.[71] This appointment served to complicate what must have been a rather full life. He wrote Dr. White that he had a great desire to attend the meeting of the General Convention, but:

> I am also importuned to be at Hillsborough at y t very juncture, at a meeting of a Board of Trustees for a University of this state. The Business that claims my presence there is particularly fixing on the place where s'd university shall be situated and unless the eastern members generally attend, it will probably be carried too far westward. This is an object in wch I feel myself also a good deal interested.[72]

No doubt he followed his lifelong tendency to place spiritual things first and attended to his churches; at least he did not attend the meeting of the trustees.[73]

Little is known of the North Carolina Episcopal convention of 1793. There was no record kept of the proceedings and few sources shed any light whatever on the meeting. Furthermore the evidence about the convention is contradictory. Pettigrew wrote, "I am this far on my way back from Tarborough. . . . *There was no Convention.*"[74] But a letter from Dr. Solomon

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[68] Charles Pettigrew to Dr. John Leigh, June 15, 1790, Pettigrew MSS.
[69] Charles Pettigrew to Dr. William White, March 12, 1792 (copy), Pettigrew MSS. De Rosset, *Church History*, 188-189.
[70] Perry, *Journals*, I, 173.
[71] "Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina" (unpublished MSS., University of North Carolina Library), I, 36.
[72] Charles Pettigrew to Dr. William White, March 12, 1792, Pettigrew MSS.
[73] "Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina," I, 41-51.
[74] Charles Pettigrew to Miss Mary Lockhart, October 3, 1793, Pettigrew MSS. [italics mine.]

Halling written to Pettigrew on December 16, 1793, specifically states that there was a convention.

It was to me one of the greatest disappointments that you could not meet with us in Convention, and I am sincerely sorry for the cause of your non-attendance. It will exceed the bounds of a letter to acquaint you with all the business we went through but . . . the following short abstract . . . will afford you some idea of our transactions.[75]

Robert Johnston Miller, in a letter written years later to Dr. Francis Lister Hawks, stated that a convention met and appointed a standing committee and published a circular "To those of the same persuasion in each county of the state," that called attention "to the decay of the church and requested that the laity gather and in the absence of any Pastor have a member of the Vestry read the service of the day."[76] Since there is no account of any other convention meeting at Tarborough in 1793, Pettigrew apparently confused the time of the meeting.

One of the matters discussed at this meeting was the selection of a bishop for North Carolina. This was to be done in accordance with the plan of the General Convention of 1785 that encouraged the election of bishops by the state conventions.[77] The North Carolina group, however, failed to elect a bishop. Halling explained the inaction as follows:

You may reasonably suppose, that it would have been inadvisable in us to appoint a Bishop-elect.

The smallness of our number would have subjected Him to reproach, and our Church also,—if anything possibly can, after it has evidenced such a want of zeal; for the professors of our religion, have not on this occasion *even* shewed themselves to be *lukewarm*.[78]

With regard to the person for the office, Halling said "I believe it will be the general wish that you should be elected to the Episcopacy of North Carolina. My exertions shall not be spared on this occasion; and you must not refuse. consider it a call from Heaven and reflect on your former vows."[79] The convention

[75] Solomon Halling to Charles Pettigrew, December 10, 1793, Pettigrew Papers.
[76] De Rosset, *Church History*, 189-191, 423-425.
[77] Perry, *Journals*, I, 23-25.
[78] Solomon Halling to Charles Pettigrew, December 16, 1793, Pettigrew Papers.
[79] Solomon Halling to Charles Pettigrew, December 16, 1793, Pettigrew Papers.

of 1793 called a meeting for the last Wednesday in May, 1794, to form a constitution and elect a bishop.

One of the tangible results of the convention of 1790 was the ordination of Solomon Halling,[80] who followed Dr. Leonidas Cutting as rector of Christ's Church in New Bern. It was Halling who persuaded the standing committee to call a convention to meet in May, 1794.[81] He was supported by Pettigrew who, however, held out little hope of success.

> I most ardently wish, that your indeavours may succeed to your most sanguine expectations, But such is the coldness, & such the inattention of those in general, who profess themselves members of our Church, with respect to Things of a religious nature, that I am affraid, your so laudable exertions to draw together a full convention, will not be crowned with suitable success.[82]

To Pettigrew, Dr. Halling's remarks concerning the possibility of his being elected bishop were "far from flattering" and were truly "mortifying" to him. He feared that he would prove inadequate for those duties.[83]

In May, 1794, the convention met at Tarborough, with attendance higher than at any previous time. Pettigrew opened the session with a sermon. The convention selected delegates to the General Convention; elected Charles Pettigrew bishop of North Carolina Diocese; and drew up a constitution for the government of the body. Resolutions endorsing the bishop-elect were signed by five members of the clergy and eight members of the laity.[84] The bishop-elect reported to Doctor William White:

> It was thought advisable at our Episcopal Convention in this State for last year, to frame a constitution for the particular government of the church in this state, which was accordingly done.[85]

The General Convention required that the members of the convention recommending a person for consecration certify that they had known him personally for three years.[86] Because of the

[80] De Rosset, *Church History*, 422.
[81] De Rosset, *Church History*, 422.
[82] Charles Pettigrew to Solomon Halling, February 2, 1794, Pettigrew Papers.
[83] Charles Pettigrew to Solomon Halling, February 2, 1794, Pettigrew Papers.
[84] De Rosset, *Church History*, 426-433.
[85] Charles Pettigrew to Dr. William White, June 9, 1795, Pettigrew Papers.
[86] Perry, *Church History*, I, 55.

difficulties of communication, the members of the North Carolina convention were unable to comply with this canon. A committee was appointed to draw up a form which the members could conscientiously sign and at the same time endorse the candidate. Pettigrew was afraid that the deviation from the prescribed form would not be allowed. When he submitted the testimonial to Dr. White he said: "I could add a testimonial or Certificate from the good people of the District of Edenton, where I have lived and preached now about twenty years, should you think it necessary."[87] In reply White assured Pettigrew that the depositions of the committee substantially conformed to the second canon of 1789, which had not been seen by the North Carolina clergy.[88]

Late in the summer of 1795, Bishop-elect Pettigrew started to Philadelphia to be consecrated. He stopped in Edenton and wrote a hasty note to his wife relating that he "got over" the river "without rain but that it pursued" him "to the wharf." He mentioned the fact that he had forgotten his umbrella but had been lent one. Fear of yellow fever forced him to discontinue his trip.[89] To his sons at the University of North Carolina he explained:

I set out a fortnight ago to meet the General Convention at Philadelphia agreeably to my appointment. But when I had got well on my journey towards Norfolk, where I intended to go on board the Packet, the reports of the yellow fever, and the mortality which attended it were such, that I concluded it the most prudent to return, so that I have declined going at this time, if ever.[90]

Pettigrew wrote to Bishop White explaining why he did not attend the convention. He said:

Had I proceeded, it is probable I should have found the Packet stopt, if otherwise, it would have been very dangerous to have gone aboard with passengers flying from the Disorder, after taking the infection perhaps, and could I have got on board of a Vessel bound for either Philadelphia or New York, the danger would have been equal, besides being obliged to perform Quarrentine after our arrival, which would have defeated my intention of being at the Convention. The journey by land would not be much short of five hundred miles—besides it is the most

[87] Charles Pettigrew to Dr. William White, June 9, 1795, Pettigrew MSS.
[88] Dr. William White to Charles Pettigrew, July 6, 1795, Pettigrew Papers.
[89] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Pettigrew, August 29, 1795, Pettigrew MSS.
[90] Charles Pettigrew to John and Ebenezer Pettigrew, September 19, 1795, Pettigrew MSS.

sickly season of the year, so that it is probable I might not arrive before the rising of the Convention. From all these considerations I have concluded to postpone it, for a more favourable time.[91]

The fact that the General Convention had been postponed because of the epidemic of yellow fever in Philadalphia was unknown to the worried bishop-elect for some time.[92]

Pettigrew planned to attend the next General Convention scheduled for September, 1798. The convention never assembled, however, because of

the appearance of yellow fever . . . & the alarming probability of its spreading through this city [Philadelphia]. . . . The Chairman and some members of the Standing Committee of the church, have had a conference with Bishop White on the subject, and have considered it their duty to circulate this notice [postponing the meeting], to their brethren in each state, to prevent the trouble and expense of an unavailing attendence. Measures will be taken, either by adjournment, agreeably to the constitution, or by a recommendation of the standing committee to the Bishops as provided for . . . [illegible] the journals of 1795, to have a special convention called about the beginning of June next. . . .[93]

The special convention met but Pettigrew did not attend. One reason for non-attendance was his illness, but there might have been other important considerations. "Your reasons for not applying for Consecration certainly were weighty; and I make no doubt but you were right in declining. You certainly were the best judge in the matter,"[94] wrote Nathaniel Blount to Charles Pettigrew early in 1799. The bishop-elect also failed to attend the General Conventions of 1801 and 1804.[95] The only plausible reason he advanced was the state of his health. On one occasion he wrote to Dr. Halling in New Bern, "I had thought of publishing three sermons, on the subject of Baptism: but my health has been so poor, that I could not transcribe them, and fit them for the public eye."[96] In all his correspondence during these years his ill health was constantly emphasized.[97]

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[91] Charles Pettigrew to Dr. William White, September 5, 1795, Pettigrew Papers.
[92] De Rosset, *Church History*, 196.
[93] Dr. William White and William Smith to Charles Pettigrew, August 8, 1798, Pettigrew Papers.
[94] Transcripts, Pettigrew Papers; Nathaniel Blount to Charles Pettigrew, January 17, 1799, Pettigrew Papers.
[95] Perry, *Church History*, I, 259-291.
[96] Charles Pettigrew to Solomon Halling, February 2, 1794, Pettigrew MSS.
[97] Correspondence, 1798-1807, Pettigrew MSS.

The efforts of Charles Pettigrew and his fellow workers to organize the Diocese of North Carolina and to secure the ordination of a bishop failed utterly. The conventions of 1790, 1791, 1793, and 1794 were unsuccessful for they did not in any way revive the church in North Carolina. One of the ministers who actively participated in the movement to revive the Episcopal Church wailed:

> Nothing that we did then has, that I know of, been of consequence at all. How little regard has been paid to the intended Constitution—nor have we ever been yet (that I know of) represented in any of the General Conventions. Oh! the deplorable situation of the Episcopal church in this State.[98]

Solomon Halling was the only member of the clergy in North Carolina who ever waxed enthusiastic over chances for the successful revival of the church. In fact, the men who should have been active in leadership were pessimistic about the attempted revival. Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire has pointed out the fact that the "deceptive legal status, and the legislative provision for the church [before the Revolution] obscured her essentially spiritual character, and prevented her people from crystalizing in strong and self-reliant congregations capable of sustaining themselves. . . ."[99] This lack of self-reliant congregations was another reason for the failure of the North Carolina conventions. Only in the Tarborough region, at Edenton, and at New Bern were the congregations integrated to any degree.

Another important factor in the failure of the conventions in North Carolina was the lack of doctrinal unity. Pettigrew, Halling, Cutting, and Wilson in general agreed theologically, but others differed with them. For example, Pattillo wrote Pettigrew in 1788 that George Micklejohn (a Tory during the Revolution) and James Craig were respectively "a Deist" and a "Son of Thunder."[100] Many of the prominent laymen were deists and uninterested in reviving the church.[101] Furthermore, there were not sufficient ministers to fill the various churches. And when there were ministers, as R. J. Miller pointed out, there was not

[98] Nathaniel Blount to Charles Pettigrew, September 15, 1798, Pettigrew Papers.
[99] De Rosset, *Church History*, 245.
[100] Henry Pattillo to Charles Pettigrew, December 13, 1788, Pettigrew MSS. George Micklejohn was an Episcopal minister of Granville County. James Craig was rector of Cumberland Parish in Virginia and North Carolina.
[101] Henry Pattillo to Dr. Andrew Knox, undated, Pettigrew MSS.

a sufficient supply of prayer books or other needed materials. As a result the people listened to the Baptists and Presbyterians, who filled their heads with predestination.[102]

The institution of slavery was also a complicating factor. Devereux Jarrett, whose parish extended from Virginia into eastern North Carolina, wrote Edward Drumgoole that in his parish the slavery issue had been injected as a religious issue and that

> even allowing that those who retain Bondsmen are wrong in so doing, yet I should think they ought not to be put on a level (as they are now) with *horsethieves & Hogstealers, Knaves &* c. . . . I say I think this ought not to be done; especially as they suppose they are warranted in their Practice by the example of Abraham, Isaac, and the writings [of the Apostles].[103]

Just how widespread these schisms were in the North Carolina Diocese is unknown, but the fact that they existed in an adjoining area indicates that the church was subject to a variety of handicaps.

The selection of Pettigrew for bishop was another factor contributing to the failure of the conventions. Undoubtedly the presence of a bishop in the state would have done much to facilitate reorganization, and Pettigrew's failure to qualify hampered the cause. He was forced to secure his income from planting and to divide his attention at a time when his unyielding spirit might well have provided the spark for reintegration of his church. As Pettigrew himself wrote:

> . . . it appears to me in the clearest light of Demonstration, that our Church requires a *head.*
>
> Misunderstand me not I believe Christ to be the great Head of his church universal; but for the sake of *regularity, good order, and respectability,* there certainly ought to be one vested with *authority* to preside, as *Primus inter pares.* However, I would not wish the power to *ordain,* to sensure, to *suspend,* or *degrade,* to be vested in him alone, but only to be *exercised by him,* with the concurrence of his brethren, the clergy, met in convocation.[104]

It is possible that a financially secure leader would have been able to weld the diffuse fragments of the church into a whole.

[102] Reuben Ellis to Edward Drumgoole, August 30, 1786, Drumgoole MSS.
[103] Devereux Jarrett to Edward Drumgoole, March 22, 1788, Pettigrew MSS.
[104] Charles Pettigrew to Solomon Halling, February 2, 1794, Pettigrew Papers.

Certainly an active leader would have facilitated such reorganization.

A final factor contributing to the failure of the conventions was the difficulty of transportation and communication. This factor hampered the association of the clergy and tended to prevent their formation into a closely knit organization. It sometimes took a month for communications to go from Edenton to New Bern, a distance of about forty miles.[105] Personal travel was equally difficult. On one occasion Pettigrew planned to attend a conference of the Methodists and "sent out for my Horse with a desire, if possible, to give my attendance—But he, with another, had broke, or been rid out of the pasture, so that they were not found for several days, & then seven or eight miles off."[106]

Because of the difficulties of communication and transportation, Charles Pettigrew was not even acquainted with all the members of the clergy in his church. He wrote to Dr. Cutting in 1791, giving a list of the clergy and concluded "These are all the clergy of the Episcopal order that I have heard of in the state. Should you know, or hear, of any to the Southward of New Bern, I must request of you to acquaint them with this matter."[107] In the light of the difficulties of travel, the small number of persons attending the conventions is easy to understand. Pastors forced to oversee plantations could rarely afford to lose two or more weeks during the growing season. This condition contributed to the failure of the North Carolina conventions.

As bishop-elect, Charles Pettigrew desired to give impetus to the movement for reorganization:

> I must make use of the small influence I have, under my present appointment of Bishop-elect, to have Vestries chosen in the different counties where they have not been chosen, & to have new elections where that regulation has taken place & their year is expired.
>
> This is agreeable to an article of our constitution. There are some however, who do not profess themselves members of our church, that can either elect or be elected to serve as vestrymen.

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[105] The Reverend Wilson Blount received the letter written on the day of the death of his twin sister, who was the Reverend Charles Pettigrew's first wife, on April 25, 1786. She died March 16, 1786.

[106] Charles Pettigrew to Edward Drumgoole, September 22, 1784, Pettigrew MSS.

[107] Charles Pettigrew to Leonidas Cutting, 1791 (copy), Pettigrew MSS.

I most sincerely wish that some Episcopal clergyman of eminence, would come into our state. I would very cheerfully resign my appointment in his favor. We are but few, & the vacancies very numerous.[108]

Pettigrew undoubtedly wrote many letters in this connection to prominent laymen and to the ministers of his church, but the only correspondence extant is that with Charles Moore of Mt. Tirzah, Person County. The bishop-elect wrote to Moore giving an account of the state convention. In closing he said:

Permit me now Sir, to request you in behalf of our declining church, to have a vestry chosen in your country, of such as profess themselves churchmen . . . . you will also I hope recommend it to those of the next counties, as opportunity may serve. By this means you will fall into an organized state; also place lay-readers in your chapels, whereby you will be known from those of different persuasions by Solemnly joining together on Sundays, in the worship of Almighty God, than which nothing can render Society more truly respectful.[109]

Some months later Moore replied that an organization of the vestry had been effected. Discussing the possibilities of the success of the organization, Moore said:

As I was from my childhood, brought up in the Church of England . . . the flourishing of the . . . Episcopal Church is a circumstance very near my heart, but I have to lament that the few of us that are in this & the neighboring counties are almost as sheep without a shepard, and many who formerly were of that Church from a motive of piety been drawn aside to other Denominations, not having an Opportunity of worshipping God in the way that they had been brought up. Should we be so happy as to have a worthy, Pious Pastor of the Church fixed among us, I make no doubt but many would return, to the Bosom of our mother, and the rising generation would be nourished under her Wings.[110]

In 1795 the bishop-elect and Robert Johnston Miller, an Episcopal minister, ordained in the Lutheran Church,[111] toyed with the idea of a coalition of the Lutheran and Episcopal churches in North Carolina.[112] Pettigrew mentioned this possibility to

[108] Charles Pettigrew to Dr. William White, September 5, 1795, Drumgoole MSS.
[109] Charles Pettigrew to Charles Moore, November 2, 1795, Pettigrew MSS.
[110] Charles Moore to Charles Pettigrew, April 21, 1796, Pettigrew Papers.
[111] De Rosset, *Church History*, 381-385.
[112] Charles Pettigrew to Dr. William White, May 6, 1795; Robert J. Miller to Charles Pettigrew, May 6, 1795 (copy), Pettigrew MSS.

Bishop White, but receiving no advice he failed to push the matter. Thus "Mr. Miller was left powerless to do anything for the effectual upbuilding of the church."[113]

In the towns many obstacles confronted Pettigrew. Regarding these barriers to re-vitalizing the New Bern parish, Dr. Halling wrote:

> Upon the receipt of your letter, I called the vestry together, and consulted them upon the propriety of acting as you had directed, and urged the extreme necessity of adopting the measures you had proposed for the advancement of our church. They objected to the time, and could not be induced to proceed to the election of a Vestry in the manner you had recommended. Their reasons against the former were the impropriety of choosing persons for a religious purpose, at the time of electing members of the General Assembly, as many are either too much interested in this issue, or intoxicated with liquor, and the opposition that might follow, in consequence of other Sects being there Present.[114]

Because of these obstacles few benefits can be traced to Charles Pettigrew's efforts to rehabilitate the church. "The names of a few of the lay-readers," appointed as a result of the bishop-elect's efforts to perfect the Episcopal church organization in North Carolina, "have lingered" with the church antiquarians, but little other evidence of his work is extant.

The efforts of the bishop-elect to revive his church failed for the same reasons that the conventions failed. "The Church was powerless because Clergy and laity thought they were powerless."[115] Pettigrew himself had little confidence in the outcome of the efforts for a revival of the church.[116] Perhaps it was this feeling of futility that enabled the bishop-elect to retire from active service with so little regret. His application for consecration by the General Convention was not renewed after 1795, but he remained the recognized head of the church until 1799. It was generally understood that he desired to resign. "Perhaps it would have been better if you had endeavoured to get a convention, and had made a formal resignation: but I don't know whether it would have been best or not; or whether a convention

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[113] De Rosset, *Church History*, 387.
[114] Solomon Halling to Charles Pettigrew, April 19, 1796 (Ann B. Shepard Pettigrew copy, 1864), Pettigrew MSS.
[115] De Rosset, *Church History*, 208.
[116] Charles Pettigrew to Solomon Halling, February 2, 1794 (copy), Pettigrew MSS.

could have been gotten,"[117] wrote one of his fellow ministers in 1799. Pettigrew ceased to consider himself head of the church after that date and, while he still retained his widespread connections, he yielded more and more to his local interests.

In 1797 Charles Pettigrew moved to his Belgrade plantation in Tyrrell County. He remained there until his death. It was for his services in that region that the name "Old Parson" was given him. He was in constant demand to officiate at christenings, weddings, and funerals. Occasionally he received money for his services but more frequently he did not.[118] He preached on Sundays in a schoolhouse on the farm of Josiah Phelps.[119] Writing his sister in 1800 with reference to his local religious activities, he said: "I have preached this 6 years past[120] without gratuity or reward, nor shall I ever ask anything. I wish I could do some good; but I feel mankind have greatly degenerated in the last twenty years."[121] The schoolhouse used as a meeting place proved unsatisfactory because of its smallness and its distance from the homes of the members of the congregation.[122] In 1803 the "Old Parson" donated land for a chapel on his plantation and furnished most of the necessary materials. He wrote Reverend Nathaniel Blount as follows:

I am building a Chapel on my own land close by me, and am in expectation of having it so forward in about 6 months that we can convene in it with conveniency to ourselves.

We have gote one nearly finished about 12 miles above, where I attend two Sundays in the month, unless prevented by sickness or bad weather.[123]

The congregation contributed some work[124] and in a few months the chapel was completed. The following year he wrote Blount:

Since I have got our new Chapels in such a State as to meet comfortably in them, I feel myself quite happy in the exercise of my

[117] Transcripts, Reverend Nathaniel Blount to Charles Pettigrew, January 17, 1799, Pettigrew MSS.
[118] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Verner, May 26, 1800, Pettigrew MSS. "Transcripts," *passim;* Charles Pettigrew to Nathaniel Blount, August 23, 1793; February 22, 1804, Pettigrew MSS.
[119] De Rosset, *Church History*, 216.
[120] While minister at Edenton it was his custom to preach occasionally in different parts of Tyrrell County.
[121] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Verner, May 26, 1800, Pettigrew MSS.
[122] De Rosset, *Church History*, 216.
[123] Transcripts, Charles Pettigrew to Nathaniel Blount, February 22, (1804?), Pettigrew MSS.
[124] De Rosset, *Church History*, 216.

ministerial functions, from a variety of favorable circumstances, One of which is the people attend much better. Indeed my own chapel is generally crowded; while they hear with great seriousness & attention—and now I begin to hope, that through the concurrent blessing of God, my feeble Labours may be useful among the people. I am in hopes they now begin to think me in earnest, after having preached to them about seven years, & built them a Decent & commodious Chapel at my own expense, except a few days work, besides attending at their funerals to the neglect of my own business, & taking nothing from them for any service I render them, in the united character of their clergyman & physicial. . . . am happy in the thought, that they cannot attribute my faithfulness . . . to an expectation of being paid for it . . . . I thank God, I can live without it & the people are poor . . . . Before the dissolution of the establishment, I absolutely forbid anything to be collected from the Quakers for me, as I would not receive it. Neither have I taken anything for either visiting the sick, or baptising during the course of my ministry.[125]

Pettigrew continued to serve as spiritual guardian of his neighbors until his death. The ravages of a chest condition, possibly tuberculosis, limited his activities and he seldom left Belgrade Plantation.[126]

Like other ministers of his generation Charles Pettigrew was greatly under the influence of Calvinistic theological doctrines.[127] Several of his sermons cover the wickedness and depravity of mankind, the ugliness of worldly life, and the payment to be made for earthly sins at the hands of a pitiless diety.[128] Throughout his career, Pettigrew was a stickler for infant baptism, yet he strenuously objected to the doctrine of infant damnation.[129] Some of his sermons were probably well received since he noted that they were repeatedly used and occasionally at the same church.[130] For example, "A Sermon on the Love of God" was preached at "the Court House," May 6, 1798; at Phelps Chapel, August 15, 1802; at Skinners Chapel, July 1, 1804; and at White Chapel, July 22, 1804.[131] This sermon is comparatively short and well written, being documented both with quotations from the Scriptures and from current religious authorities. One sermon with the title missing was preached first at Edenton, July 19, 1778,

[125] Charles Pettigrew to Nathaniel Blount, February 22, 1804, Pettigrew Papers.
[126] Nathaniel Blount to Charles Pettigrew, May 4, 1802, Pettigrew MSS.
[127] Sermons, *passim*, Pettigrew MSS.
[128] Sermons, *passim*, Pettigrew MSS.
[129] Correspondence and Sermons, 1775-1807, *passim*, Pettigrew MSS.
[130] Sermons, *passim*, Pettigrew MSS.
[131] "Sermon on the Love of God," Pettigrew MSS.

and last at Phelps Chapel, July 15, 1798. During this span of twenty years Pettigrew noted that he used it at eleven different chapels.[132] Possibly these notations of the places where the sermons were used served to prevent a common ministerial failing—that of using the same sermon on the same congregation too often.

These sermons, and others, reveal that Charles Pettigrew was well acquainted with theological authorities as well as the Greek and Latin testaments. One writer, after studying the sermons, arrived at the conclusion that he was a good Latin scholar and that his favorite author was Virgil.[133] They are cited as "a sermon on—with a Hymn on the Subject by the author."[134] The sermons were constantly revised, some passages were struck out, and insertions were made. Pettigrew wrote some of his sermons and then did not deliver them. An interesting feature of all the sermons is the use of hymns, placed before and after the sermon. In most cases there can be no doubt that he wrote these hymns since his correspondence reveals that he dabbled with poetry, but it is probable that they were modeled on then current hymns. These hymns were usually "lined out" to congregations, which procedure served to supply the deficiency of hymn books.[135] On November 4, 1804, Pettigrew preached "a Sermon on the Declaration of Christ in Favor of Little Children with a Hymn on the subject by the Author." The hymn, typical of many he wrote, is as follows:

When Infants die, ye Parents why
Should Tears of Sorrow flow.
Seeing they rise to endless joys
From troubles here below.

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Teach us O God! to kiss the Rod
And own thy hand divine.
In every blow though full of wo
Nor let us once repine.[136]

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[132] Sermon (no title), Pettigrew MSS.
[133] "MSS., of James Johnston Pettigrew," Pettigrew MSS., also printed in De Rosset, *Church History*, 218-223.
[134] Sermons, *passim*, Pettigrew MSS.
[135] Charles Moore to Charles Pettigrew, April 21, 1796, Pettigrew MSS.; Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, 436-438.
[136] "Sermon on the Declaration of Christ in Favor of Little Children," 1804, Pettigrew MSS.

This hymn had the virtue of covering a subject close to the audience.[137] The chief virtues of his sermons and hymns was their simplicity, conciseness, and personal appeal.

Tradition relates that Charles Pettigrew was "a fluent and eloquent speaker," with a voice "soft and pleasant to the ear."[138] He addressed himself directly to his audience and preferred to speak simply "in a kind of unsteadied address" in preference to an oratorical appeal to the emotions.[139] He frequently condemned the practice, followed by ministers of all persuasions and especially the Baptists and Methodists, of appealing to the emotions.[140] He said:

This they did by what I call the *grievance of preaching* mere bodily exercise which profiteth little. They worked the people up in such a flame, that when they got time to cool down, they have grown imperturably hard & obdurate and many of them seem to indicate strongly that their last State is worse than the first . . . in the consequence, they are more deceitful, more lying, & hypocritical than ever. They were warned but not instructed. Their religion was placed in their passions, & these are now cooled & their religion is fled. The hobby horse has been riden to death and alas! what is worse their minds have been industriously prejudiced against rational & instructive preaching.[141]

Writing to his brother Ebenezer in the district of Ninety-Six, in South Carolina, he said: "I am affraid too many of them place Religion in a certain movement of the passions, & some religious affectations for a time . . . when indeed true religion consists in an humble walk with God, & constant endeavor after higher degrees of personal holiness."[142] In the latter statement the ministerial philosophy of Charles Pettigrew is expressed. Yet in one of his more reflective moments he was forced to admit, "Perhaps if I had more life in religion it would diffuse itself, But alas! I find myself too cold, to be an instrument of diffusing much vital warmth to others."[143]

The direct address method used by Charles Pettigrew commanded the respect of the intelligent people of his acquaintance. Consequently he was called upon to deliver eulogies on important

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[137] Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, 739, *passim*.
[138] De Rosset, *Church History*, 237.
[139] Charles Pettigrew to Henry Pattillo, January 9, 1789, Pettigrew MSS.
[140] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Verner, May 26, 1800, Pettigrew MSS.
[141] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Verner, May 26, 1799, Pettigrew MSS.
[142] Charles Pettigrew to Ebenezer Pettigrew, May 25, 1789, Pettigrew MSS.
[143] Charles Pettigrew to Henry Pattillo, January 9, 1789, Pettigrew MSS.

people, among them George Washington.[144] His eulogy on Washington was delivered in the grandlioquent style which the occasion demanded.[145] One of his most famous eulogies was that delivered at the funeral of United States Supreme Court Justice James Iredell, in October, 1799.[146] In delivering Iredell's funeral oration, Pettigrew lost the coldness which accompanied his more staid religious utterances and showered the deceased with all the flowery adjectives at his command.[147] The eulogies of Washington and Iredell are the only ones extant of the many which his correspondence indicates he delivered.

The only recorded occasion where the funeral oration failed to please the audience was that delivered at the burial of Benjamin Smith. "One of the People," a friend of Smith, wrote an address in which he criticized the manner in which the funeral was conducted.[148] This aroused the ire of the usually calm minister who noted on the address, "A Stupid Blockhead but as he says 'One of the People!' " Again, "Done I suspect by Zaphaniah Davies for Charles Spruill. Of this there is no doubt for it is evident by his scholarship."[149]

The principal religious influence of Pettigrew was local. While he was well known to the leading members of his church, both clergy and laity, throughout the state his efforts outside his Tyrrell and St. Paul's parishes consistently failed. It was around the Edenton region principally that the strenuous efforts he put forth brought a measure of success. While his brother ministers struggled to prevent the inroads of other sects upon their congregations, Pettigrew said, "I can only say, I am not troubled with sectaries. The Anabaptists have dwindled to nothing, & I don't know that there has ever been a Methodist Resident in Chowan or Perquimans."[150] That this was more than a figurative remark is doubtful, but there can be no doubt that the effort of Charles Pettigrew to maintain his church in the Edenton region was eminently successful.

The approach of what he was positive—and correctly so—was his death found the "Old Parson," as he was called, still in

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[144] Eulogy on the Death of General Washington, no date, Pettigrew MSS.
[145] Eulogy on the Death of General Washington, no date, Pettigrew MSS.
[146] McRee, *Iredell*, II, 585.
[147] McRee, *Iredell*, II, 585-588.
[148] "An address on the Occasion of the Burial of Benjamin Smith," Pettigrew MSS.
[149] "An address on the Occasion of the Burial of Benjamin Smith," Pettigrew MSS.
[150] Charles Pettigrew to Henry Pattillo, January 9, 1789, Pettigrew MSS.

harness warring against the Baptists and their cohorts. In 1803 two Baptist ministers, Lemuel Burkitt and Jessie Read, published *A Concise History of The Kehukee Baptist Association.*[151] Pettigrew was outraged by many of their claims and religious doctrines. He addressed a series of letters to the editor of the *Edenton Gazette* stating as a basis for his remarks that since newspapers should be used for other purposes than political information and amusement, he proposed to address a series of letters "in the religious style to our Brethren of the Baptist Persuasion,"[152] to be signed "Philanthropus." In these letters he denounced the strict Calvinism of the Baptists as well as their Arminianism, and their views on a variety of subjects from immersion as the *Sine Qua non* of membership to infant baptism and irreligion. James Wells of Edenton printed twelve of these in book form in 1807.[153] Pettigrew noted in the preface to the published volume that these letters had been written while he was confined to his room in his "last illness" and that he only desired that the people should hear all sides of the question and know the truth. Whether or not these letters served any purpose must remain a question unanswered. The fact that Pettigrew was still challenging other sects indicates, however, that he retained his religious views and mental drive unchanged until his death.

The familiar sobriquet, "Old Parson," is indicative of a great many unrecorded deeds. In a day when "the clergy were rarely popular and always subjected to harsh criticism . . . the manner which he discharged the very onerous duties of his calling, in a sickly country, was exemplary."[154] He was constantly called on to perform his duties as a minister and he usually responded. Typical of such demands is the following: "It is with extreme regret that I communicate to you the death of Mr. Jacob Blount . . . it is proposed to bury him tomorrow, when it is earnestly

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[151] Lemuel Burkitt and Jessie Read, *A Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist Association* (Halifax, N. C.: A. Hodge, 1803).

[152] Letters, Pettigrew Papers.

[153] "Philanthropus" (Charles Pettigrew), *A Series of Letters in Which An Attentive persual of Mr. Edward's Candid reasons for renouncing the Principles of Antepaedo. baptism is seriously recommended and the right of infants to membership in the Church of God is also pleaded. The Letters Being first published by the author in the Edenton Gazette.* The first five were addressed to Mess. *Burkitt, Read* and other *ministers* of the Baptist *Kehukee Association.* The subsequent five were addressed *To The People* as being the most worthy. A reply to the *first letter* by Mr. Burkitt and to the *third* by a Mr. Poindexter, are annexed, as they have been answered (Edenton: James Willis, 1807).

[154] McRee, *Iredell,* II, 193.

requested . . . that you would attend, if with convenience to yourself you can possible—a Canoe and hands wait on you at mr. Chessons."[155] Other ministers complained that "Preaching houses are but tolerable"[156] but Charles Pettigrew was interested in the spiritual welfare of his people and made few complaints.

Charles Pettigrew, a frail man of average height,[157] riding over the muddy trails and crossing the sound in a skiff in all kinds of weather to visit the sick[158] or attend to the religious needs of some group, was a familiar picture to the people of the Edenton region.[159] Illustrations of his generosity are legion.[160] He was loved and respected by most of the people who knew him and he had few enemies.[161] He died April 8, 1807, at the age of sixty-three at Belgrade Plantation in Tyrrell County leaving a rich spiritual legacy to those whom he had served well.

[155] Alex W. Miller to Charles Pettigrew, January 22, 1801, Pettigrew MSS.
[156] (W. C. Blades ?) to Edward Drumgoole, September 26, 1788, Drumgoole MSS.
[157] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Verner, May 26, 1800, Pettigrew MSS.
[158] Charles Pettigrew to Mrs. Mary Pettigrew, March 15, 1795, Pettigrew MSS.
[159] Correspondence, *passim*, 1777-1807, Pettigrew MSS.
[160] De Rosset, *Church History*, 217.
[161] Correspondence, *passim*, Pettigrew MSS.